



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Christopher Shorter, Assistant City Manager  
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager

**DATE:** March 9, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Update on Homeless Service Initiatives

---

This memorandum serves as a cross-departmental update on citywide efforts and initiatives to address issues related to homelessness. The memorandum is organized into four primary sections, including (1) homeless services delivery and outreach, (2) housing services, (3) encampment clean up and storage and (4) communications.

### **HOMELESS SERVICES DELIVERY AND OUTREACH**

#### **Austin Public Health Homeless Services Division**

The January 17, 2020 memorandum to Mayor and Council members provided details on the realignment of the Homeless Strategy Office and establishment of a Homeless Services Division (HSD) within Austin Public Health (APH). Ms. Vella Karman, who has served as the Program Manager for the Social Services Policy Unit within APH, has been appointed to lead the division as the Interim Homeless Services Officer, effective February 3, 2020. While we have maintained our existing structure of priority leads responsible for specific focus areas, Ms. Karman now serves as the point-of-contact for homelessness-related activities and is responsible for convening community partners, service providers and priority area leads to ensure effective system coordination and day-to-day program operations and support. The City Manager's Executive Leadership team comprised of Deputy City Manager Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Assistant City Manager Chris Shorter, Assistant City Manager Rodney Gonzales, Austin Public Health Director Stephanie Hayden and Vella Karman, Interim Homeless Services Officer meets on a regular weekly basis and provides strategic support, high-level review of operational decision-making, and liaisons with community partners and homeless strategy consultants.

#### **Guided Path Pilot**

Beginning in October 2019, the City, Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), and community service providers developed a targeted approach to assessing needs and reaching out to individuals in the encampment area outside the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH). The program is working with 99 individuals to meet their needs and secure safe and stable housing opportunities. At the January 23, 2020 Council meeting, the City Council approved additional funding for five current contracts with community partners to resource the efforts of Guided Path

by adding case management staff capacity.

As stated during the February 18, 2020 Work Session, the breakdown for housing and engagement for 99 individuals currently identified by Guided Path for services includes the following:

<b>GUIDED PATH PILOT PROGRAM</b>		
<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Gender:</b> 21 Female 78 Male	<b>Ages:</b> 25 - 76
<b>Individuals Housed</b>	21 Individuals Total	DACC: 5 Front Steps: 3 Caritas: 3 Foundation for the Homeless: 4 Integral Care: 3 AIDS Services of Austin: 1 Limited assistance by Guided Path: 4
<b>Individuals Not Yet Housed</b>	78 Individuals Total	Enrolled in Programs leading to Housing: 66 Engaged Through Outreach Programs: 6 Not seen since Initial Survey: 3 Long-term Incarceration: 3 <i>(Previously 4 individuals: 1 person recently released is engaged with DACC)</i>

Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) is providing outreach, case management, and services for 18 of the individuals in Guided Path. DACC will continue to provide assessments and resources, and work with additional individuals engaged with Guided Path as DACC’s caseloads allow.

**Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) & Emergency Medical Services Community Health Paramedics (EMS CHP)**

During the period of January 15, 2020 through February 14, 2020 EMS CHP and HOST have provided outreach and assistance, contributed toward diversions, participated in community collaboration and coordination efforts, and provided trainings as follows.

*(Note: HOST is an interdisciplinary team from Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC), Austin Police Department (APD), EMS, and Integral Care).*

HOST and EMS CHP have provided outreach and assistance to those living in flood prone areas and those in areas scheduled for construction. Overall outreach efforts during this period have included 209 visits and reached 404 individuals. Diversions have included 2 individuals from jail, 2 individuals from psychiatric hospitals, and 19 individuals from hospital emergency departments. Services and assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness have included:

- Medical Support Services: 50 individuals
- Mental Health Assistance: 26 individuals
- Substance Use Treatment Assistance: 4 individuals

**Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) Social Services Solicitations**

DACC recently conducted three solicitations for social services including Permanent Supportive Housing and Transitional Housing, Housing-Focused Support Services, and Storage Solutions for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness. On February 20, 2020, the City Council approved an agreement with Front Steps, Inc. that will allocate up to \$500,000 annually for 27 permanent

supportive housing units, case management, and wrap around social service supports for program participants.

DACC will seek City Council approval on March 26, 2020 for an agreement with Family Eldercare for housing focused support services including representative payee services and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) application assistance for persons experiencing homelessness with an annual cost of up to \$127,434. These services were identified by DACC case management staff as critical needs for individuals served by the Intensive Case Management program.

No bids were received for the storage solicitation, but DACC is proactively seeking alternatives to fill this need for DACC clients. DACC is also partnering with the Office of Design and Delivery and other City departments to offer weekly cleanups through DACC's Community Service Restitution Crews for the storage project in development at the HealthSouth location on Red River Street.

The Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC) provided input during the development phase of DACC's solicitation process and participated in the evaluation process after applications were received. Six programs were eligible to present and nine of the fifteen AHAC members participated in the evaluation. This was a successful process, and DACC will be coordinating with ECHO, Austin Public Health, and other providers to see how DACC can help facilitate replication of AHAC's involvement in future solicitation processes for homelessness services.

### **Pay for Success**

The City has been committed to the creation and development of a multi-partner Pay for Success strategy which would provide permanent supportive housing with wrap-around services for hundreds of individuals who are chronically homeless and high utilizers of healthcare and criminal justice systems. Potential partners in this project are convening to discuss current options and necessary steps for moving forward with a project of this type in our community.

City staff remain committed to prioritizing serving our neighbors experiencing homelessness and addressing issues related to homelessness in the community. We will continue to update Council and the public as our efforts continue.

### **2020 Solutions for Individual Homeless Adults: A National Conference**

The National Alliance to End Homelessness organized the 2020 Solutions for Individual Homeless Adults: A National Conference, which was held in Oakland, California from February 19 through February 21. Local community partners including Casa Marianella and Family Eldercare presented on best practices and effective programs in Austin. LifeWorks delivered a plenary presentation to all conference attendees outlining efforts to End Youth Homelessness in Austin by the end of 2020. DACC's Director, Peter Valdez participated in a panel and focused his presentation on DACC's Intensive Case Management Model and their client-centered, housing-focused service philosophy, community partnerships, and the importance of transparency and collaborations.

## **HOUSING SERVICES**

### **Community Need for Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing**

Based on January 2020 Coordinated Assessment data from ECHO, the community need is approximately 1,000 permanent supportive housing (PSH) units and 2,000 rapid rehousing housing (RRH) units. For our purposes, PSH is defined as an intervention that combines long-term

subsidized housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness. These services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with community-based health care, treatment, and employment services. PSH is targeted, deeply affordable (no more than 30% of household income required for rent, even for tenants with extremely limited or no income), lease-based, supported through services, and aligned with Housing First Principles. RRH rapidly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services. Three core components of RRH include: 1) housing identification, 2) rent and move-in assistance, 3) rapid re-housing case management and services.

### **Motel Conversion Strategy**

In conjunction with Office of Real Estate Services (ORES) and the APH Homeless Services Division, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) is leading the Motel Conversion Strategy. Using a Housing First approach, the City is investing in conversion of motels into safe single room occupancy living spaces that help people experiencing homelessness access the stability and care they need. The City has established a goal of 300 units for this strategy to be accomplished through 2-4 converted facilities. This is an effective path forward to deliver on short- and long-term goals for permanent support housing (PSH) units.

The City Council received an update on activities at its Council Work Session Tuesday, February 18, 2020, in which the [City's motel conversion strategy](#) was discussed. With the stated community need of 1,000 PSH units, this strategy provides an avenue to achieve approximately one third of these units through the acquisition and rehabilitation of motels/hotels. The strategy acknowledges that only through collaboration with numerous community partners for the provision of services and the utilization of multiple funding sources (federal, local, private) can new PSH units be brought online and sustained over time.

### **Update on Roadway Inn – 87 Units on 1.34 acres – 2711 N. IH-35 – District 3**

On February 18, 2020, Staff also updated Council on the status of [motel conversion implementation](#). The City's acquisition of Rodeway Inn with federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds is underway. Acquisition due diligence will continue through March including an environmental review and other necessary steps. The City anticipates closing on Rodeway Inn in April 2020, assuming completion of required due diligence. Rehabilitation will follow, scoping and scheduling of work is underway and will be expedited. Following rehabilitation, these 87 units of PSH will be managed by the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) and supportive services provided by a qualified service provider. Staff will keep Council apprised on project developments of this transaction.

### **Future Facility Acquisition**

NHCD and ORES staff are looking for the next investment. Prioritization for future acquisitions will be developments that achieve single-room occupancy units (SROs); are geographically dispersed in the community; and can deliver services and operations funding paired with the appropriate capital funding source. Concurrently with the search for properties, the City will be releasing a Request for Qualifications to evaluate providers to manage and administer supportive services for future facilities. This solicitation will be released in March with a goal of summer 2020 award(s).

### **Programmatic initiatives underway**

The City of Austin's Rental Housing Development Assistance Program staff continue to work with the development community accessing General Obligation (GO) bonds for creation of new PSH

units as another key programmatic solution. PSH units achieved through the Affordable Housing Bond Program by the Austin Housing Finance Corporation are secured through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ECHO. This process allows for the funding made available through the Rental Housing Development Assistance (RHDA) program to assist the individuals experiencing chronic homelessness identified as most in need of housing through ECHO's Coordinated Assessment process.

In November, staff recommended and the Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) Board approved funding for seven developments, three of which include units dedicated to the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care (for individuals in need of rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing). City Heights will be a senior facility located in District 2 with a total of ten Continuum of Care units; Vi Collina will be a multi-family development with five units dedicated to the Continuum of Care; and Burnet Place will be a facility for very low income individuals with HIV/AIDS, dedicating nine units to the Continuum of Care. Additionally, staff has received several applications that are currently under review for facilities dedicated entirely to the Continuum of Care. Staff works with all applicants to improve and refine proposals to ensure long-term viability of the development.

Lastly, staff recognizes a financing strategy for PSH must also contemplate and deliver a long-term rental subsidy, services to sustain housing stability, and capital funding for the production of new PSH units. These three pillars for the successful creation of new PSH will require the redirection of resources and new programs to address the gaps in existing funding – to include federal and state funding. Staff is exploring the use of local funds, Housing Trust Fund, to seed and/or fund a local voucher program that can leverage other dollars to address this critical gap in PSH resource infrastructure as well as ways to increase the availability of supportive services in the community. City staff will bring forward additional information on this issue, as well as a potential timeline to achieve the community need, to Council work sessions in the future.

## **ENCAMPMENT CLEAN UP AND STORAGE**

### **Underpass and Encampment Cleaning Process and Coordination Efforts**

**Cleanup Contract:** Public Works is working with Austin Resource Recovery, Austin Transportation Department, and Purchasing on executing the next extension option on the current contract. The RCA will be on the April 9<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. Public Works will expand the scope so the contractor can assist with sites in the City's Transportation right-of-way in addition to the bridge overpasses currently serviced. The proposed funding is increased from \$386,000 to \$600,000 in order to meet the growing need in the community.

**183 Southbound Access Road at Cameron Road:** A multi-departmental task force is working together to address the encampment at 183 and Cameron Road. Contract crews joined the effort at the end of February as part of the fire recovery and cleanup effort. Public Works is also working with City Legal regarding limited access to certain areas of the site through posting notifications. This site is expected to be added to the regular cleanup schedule in March and may be adjusted to twice a month visits in April depending on observations. A phased approach to cleaning this site will involve multiple departments and agencies including, but not limited to Austin Resource Recovery, Watershed Protection, Public Works, Texas Department of Transportation, Austin Public Health, Police, and Fire. Due to the size and complexity of the cleanup necessary, it's anticipated that this project will take several months to complete. Regular updates will be provided on the status of this cleanup effort.

***Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Schedule:*** TxDOT has conducted weekly clean-up services at 17 underpass locations. The locations include:

- SH71-US290W: 1<sup>ST</sup> Street, Banister, Manchaca, South Lamar, and West Gate
- US 183: Ohlen, Payton Gin, Metric/Burnet Entrance SB, Burnet, Shoal Creek
- IH35: 15<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Street, 8-11 Street, 6-7<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Holly Street

***Public Works Schedule:*** Public Works has adjusted its schedule based on TxDOT to avoid duplication of services, and visits 41 locations once a month. In March, the schedule will be adjusted to compensate for SXSU and to visit Manchaca / Ben White, Congress / Ben White-US71 (CSR) and E Riverside Dr / S Pleasant Valley Rd Median (CSR) twice. To date in fiscal year 2020, the teams have collected approximately 216 tons of debris.

***The Watershed Protection Department:*** Watershed Protection is working on standardized language to share with homeowners, landowners, and other stakeholders to let them know what WPD is responsible for and to provide contact information for debris and encampment clean-up outside of WPD's scope of work. WPD education and public information staff is also working on an update to the Plastic Pocket Guide of Resources. The new services-focused educational materials will be provided to residents of encampments during notification periods and cleanups.

***Austin Resource Recovery*** continues to coordinate weekly cross-departmental meetings to enable communication between all departments that have a role in encampment cleanups. This group has been developing a citywide policy for encampment cleanups to ensure consistency and best practices across all efforts. The final draft is currently under review by the Homeless Services Division and the Law Department.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Communications Support

- **Dashboards:** The Communications and Public Information Office (CPIO) has met with five Council Offices and scheduled times with the remainder to get input the content and usability of the Homelessness Dashboard. CPIO will also seek input from community partners and those experiencing homelessness. The dashboard is a collaboration of CPIO, the Office of Design and Delivery, and ECHO.
- **Website:** Following the February 18 Council Work Session, CPIO created a [What's New](#) page to easily share the latest updates and resources about ending homelessness in Austin. This page will continue to be updated with content from Council Work Sessions. A larger website content strategy and redesign is underway so the site may continue to engage City leaders and constituents on progress and opportunities.
- **One-pagers:** CPIO has started developing brief communications to frame and inform how the city's efforts contribute to ending homelessness. The first three one-pagers on Motel Conversion [strategy](#) and [implementation](#) and the [Austin Clean City Strategy](#) were released at the February 18 Council Work Session. CPIO is planning on releasing additional one-pagers on various topics including ways to get involved and information on Housing First.

- Video Series: ATXN continues to produce video content to engage the community in compassionate conversations about homelessness.
  - Recently released: [Point in Time Count](#)
  - Production in progress: Chalkboard Stories of people experiencing homelessness,
  - Pre-production: Collaboration with LifeWorks on youth success stories, and a Housing First educational video
- Community Partnerships: CPIO continues to host weekly meetings with community partners working to end homelessness, identifying opportunities to collaborate and speak with unified messaging.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any comments or questions.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
CMO Executive Team  
City Department Directors and Assistant Directors